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Letter dated 4 January 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I wish to draw your attention to an extremely grave incident that occurred yesterday in the Red Sea.

Just before dawn, Israel Defence Forces intercepted the *Karin A*, a ship bound for the Palestinian Authority and packed with 50 tons of offensive weapons. The collection of weapons inspected thus far include Katyusha rockets with a range of 20 kilometres, 107 mm Katyusha rockets with a range of 8 kilometres, rocket-propelled grenade launchers (RPG) and Sager missiles, 80 mm and 120 mm long-range mortar shells, land mines, Kalashnikov assault rifles, ammunition and other explosive devices. This represents merely a fraction of the cargo contained in 83 containers that were found on board the ship. This cache of weaponry, most of it originating in the Islamic Republic of Iran, was carried on board a freighter that had been purchased by the Palestinian Authority. Thirteen crew members were on board the vessel, which was captained by an officer in the Palestinian Authority coastal police.

The attempt by the Palestinian Authority to smuggle this unprecedented number of weapons is a flagrant violation of agreements reached between the parties and is an ominous sign of Palestinian intentions to continue their terrorist campaign well into the future. These weapons were capable of striking deep into Israel and their seizure constitutes a vital act of self-defence and an important counter-terrorist measure, that has saved Israeli civilians from an untold number of terrorist attacks against Israeli population centres.

This incident comes against the background of persistent Palestinian attempts to smuggle sophisticated offensive weapons into Palestinian Authority territory by land, sea and air. It will be recalled that on 6 May 2001, the Israeli navy succeeded in intercepting a similar shipment of arms from Lebanon en route to the Gaza Strip, in an incident referred to in my letter dated 9 May 2001 (A/56/69-S/2001/459). In both instances flotation devices were found indicating that the weapons were meant to be dropped offshore and retrieved by Palestinian Authority security personnel.

The ongoing efforts of the Palestinian leadership to divert resources and donor funds in order to acquire dangerous offensive weaponry fatally undermines its

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credibility in claiming to be working for an end to violence and terrorism and a return to genuine dialogue. It testifies to the fact that Chairman Arafat's recent actions do not represent a strategic departure from terrorism, but only a tactical reduction in attacks to suit his immediate political needs. Finally, it confirms the continuing duplicity and deception of the Palestinian leadership, whereby it makes lofty declarations of its peaceful intentions and takes cursory action against low-level terrorist operatives so as to placate international audiences, while continuing to plot even more deadly aggression against Israeli citizens.

The seizure of the *Karin A* also comes at an unfortunate moment, after Israel, having thwarted a number of suicide attacks, tried to build on several days of relative calm by easing the security precautions it had put in place following the spate of terrorist bombings in early December. These measures were taken in the hope that further progress could move the parties towards the implementation of the Tenet Plan and the Mitchell Committee Report. Yesterday's incident demonstrates, however, that pressure on the Palestinian leadership must be constant and unrelenting if genuine progress is to be made towards ending the violence and terror and restarting the political process. The Palestinian leadership cannot be allowed to believe that it can satisfy the will of the international community by speeches alone.

The actions of the Palestinian Authority, in collusion with the Islamic Republic of Iran and terrorist organizations whose declared intent is the destruction of the State of Israel, are a cause for grave concern at a time when responsible members of the international community are engaged in combating the scourge of terrorism. These actions flout the will of the international community and demonstrate that the Palestinian Authority insists on being part of the problem in the war on terrorism, rather than part of the solution.

The only path forward entails the complete and total abandonment of Palestinian terrorist operations against Israel and a comprehensive and unrelenting crackdown on terrorist organizations, including the dismantling of their infrastructure. It also includes the arrest of all terrorist operatives, many of whom remain at large despite the fact that their identity and location are known to the Palestinian Authority, and a firm commitment, in both word and deed, to negotiating a settlement with Israel in a spirit of peace and partnership. Israel calls on the international community to continue to exert intense pressure on the Palestinian leadership to end its policy of double talk and deception and to undertake a genuine and unremitting effort to end the violence and terrorism that has plagued the region for well over a year.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 166, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yehuda **Lancry**
Permanent Representative